**the**

**literary**

**essay**

**A guide to the physical format, process, elements, mechanics, and evaluation of the English literary essay**

**Randolph Middle School, eighth grade, 2012-13**

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**“Imagine that your essay is your house. Then the thesis is the foundation; the grammar and punctuation are the bricks, mortar, and shingles; your language is the architecture, paint, landscaping, and window dressing. Where do you live right now? Where do you *want* to live?”**

**Part I- The Physical Format of Your Essay**

Simply put, a neat, crisp paper makes you look good. I like to say that your essays *speak* for you. If *they* look sloppy, your reader will assume *you* are sloppy and not give as much credit to your ideas as you might expect. ***Make a good first impression***.

**FOR THE *FINAL DRAFT* OF YOUR PAPER:**

* Your paper should, physically, be **clean** and **crinkle- and crease-free**.
* Your paper should be typed in a ***size 12 Times New Roman or Calibri font***. *Do* *not* use a font that is all caps or all lower case or that has odd-shaped letters and/or numbers. If you have any doubts about whether or not your typing meets these guidelines, do not use it.
* Your **entire paper** must be ***double-spaced*** (skipping lines)

The first page of your final draft must contain the following, in order, ***double-spaced*** in the upper left of the first page of the paper:

**Name, date, teacher, class period**

The **title** of the paper must be below the above heading, **centered**, with major words starting with capitals. No quotation marks, underlining, italics, or all-caps!

Each page must be **numbered in the bottom center**.

A standard five-paragraph essay should be **no shorter than 500 words** and **no longer than 700 words**. Three *typed* pages or five *handwritten* pages is the maximum. **SEE THE SAMPLE ESSAY AT THE BACK OF THIS BOOKLET!**

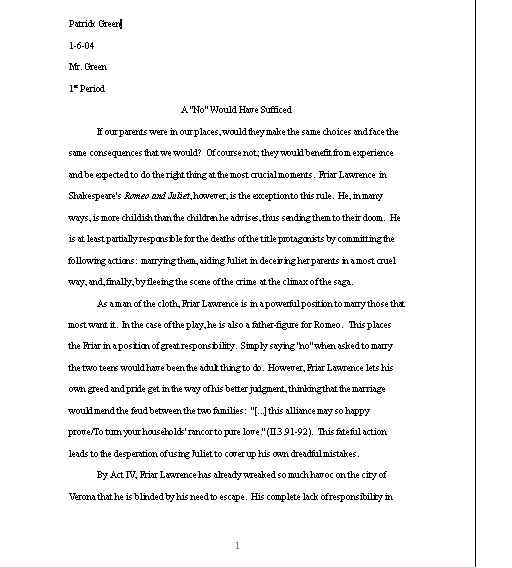
**IF YOU ARE *HANDWRITING* YOUR FINAL DRAFT**

***ALL THE GUIDELINES ABOVE STILL APPLY EXCEPT FOR THE FOLLOWING:***

* **Your *heading* (Name, Date, Teacher, Class Period) should be *single-spaced* in the upper left corner of loose-leaf paper in the *blank* area. Your *title* should be *centered* on the *first line* of the loose-leaf paper.**
* **You must only write on the *front* of your loose-leaf paper for your final draft.**
* **You must stay *within* the *red margins* of the paper.**

**EVERY OTHER RULE APPLIES, INCLUDING *DOUBLE-SPACING* AND *PAGE NUMBERING*!**

The following is an example of the proper format for the first page of a *typed* essay:



**\*\*All other pages of the paper must start at the top of the page, with each page numbered (see sample essay at end of booklet)**.

**Part II- The Process: Where to Start, Where to End**

**A.** The first thing you must do when beginning your literary analysis is **identify the *universal theme***.

* By *universal*, we mean the *main idea* of the work. It should be an idea that is understood by everyone regardless of culture, gender, or nationality.
* This identification of the universal them is *broad.* For instance, using Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*:

**Universal theme**: Prejudice. Or, more specifically, the role of ***prejudice***in *To Kill a Mockingbird.*

B. The next step is to ***identify the question****.*

* This question should be ***narrow and specific to the work you are writing about****.*

**Questions**: Is the town of Maycomb ***prejudiced***?

Is Aunt Alexandra ***prejudiced***?

How does ***prejudice*** contribute to the injustice of the conviction of Tom

Robinson?

* Here’s another example, using Ray Bradbury’s *The Martian Chronicles*:

**Universal Theme**: The role of ***greed*** in *The Martian Chronicles.*

**Questions**: Which characters are the most ***greedy*** in the novel?

Which characters are ***greedy***, and which are not?

How does ***greed*** contribute to the downfall of the Martian race?

* **Universal themes** are identified by their **generality and broadness**. They can be applied to many areas of the work being studied.
* **Questions** are identified by their **specificity** to the characters and events in the work being analyzed.

The process of moving from the *universal theme* to the *question* is, arguably, the most important part of the writing process, because ***it is the first crucial step***.

**C.** The third step is to ***answer the question with a Thesis Statement***. This statement is created by answering one of the questions and it requires an **opinionated, *argumentative* response**.

* Your goal: To form an argument that **goes beyond mere plot summary,** or the simple recounting of essential facts from the work being analyzed.
* The official term for a written argument that rises above basic factual summary (also called a “book report”) is a **thesis**, and a thesis is a **claim that is advanced through argumentation**.

Why is it important that you “make a claim”? Why not just present an explanation of what happened in the book, story, or poem and let your reader draw his/her own conclusions? Simple: Your ***audience*** (teacher, fellow students) already have a basic knowledge of the material. **It is your job to present to them an *original insight* or *claim***.

* This insight requires the use of a concept called ***inference***. Inference is definded as, “The process of reaching a logical conclusion based on facts.” In other words, it is being able to make an argument using a collection of ideas and facts from the work. **Just stating what happened is *not* inference**! **Drawing a conclusion *based* on what happened is!** What makes it argumentative is that it is your opinion and you are using actual facts from the work to back up that opinion. A good way to remember this is through a famous quote by the late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan: **“You are entitled to your own opinion, but you are not entitled to your own facts.”**
* For example, I could say, “All of Adam Sandler’s movies are really bad.” That’s an opinion with which a great number of people would disagree. But, if I went through each of his movies and **listed concrete examples** of my argument, then I am **creating an argument**, or a ***thesis***. It can still be disputed, but my argument is much stronger based on my use of **clear, concrete examples**. This is what separates a “book report” (or plot summary) from a thesis.

**Here’s a “real world” example of the difference between plot summary and thesis:**

You and a friend go out to see “The Avengers”. Afterwards, it would be both boring and annoying if your discussion of the film afterward consisted of nothing more than repeating each plot twist. For instance, your friend says, “Remember when Black Widow escaped from her captors at the beginning?” Or you say, “I loved it when Hulk started bashing Loki all over the ground. That was awesome!” This is all fine and good to start, but after a while, there’s nowhere to go with it. You’re simply sharing what you saw. ***What’s even better is when you begin to ask questions such as, “Why do you think Black Widow was able to escape from her captors so easily?” Or, “Why did the director choose to have Hulk beat Loki like that? Why didn’t he just choose to have him throw him out a window or something?”*** You would then begin to use details from the movie to make your arguments. *This* type of conversation gets to the heart of what the movie is *truly* about and goes *beyond the obvious*. Also, there is *no dispute* that Black Widow escaped her captors or that Hulk bashed Loki mercilessly into the ground, but **arguments can be made about *how* the character developed because of it and *why* they did what they did.**

* **To summarize: By reading the work, understanding the *who, what, when,* and *where* are easy. You just read the book. But understanding the *why* and the *how* is tougher. It is your job, in your thesis, to answer the *why* and the *how.***
* When you are in the process of writing, you must constantly ask yourself, “Am I making an argument or am I simply describing what I have read?” You may not come up with a completely original idea, but you still might be able to tell your reader something new rather than repeating something to them that they already know.

**Why the thesis statement is important:**

Like the foundation of a house, ***the thesis is the foundation of your paper***. It needs to be well-constructed and sound, and it will give focus and clarity to your writing. A weak, non-argumentative, thesis statement will make your paper shaky and eventually cause the entire paper to crumble. In other words, it will be boring. And boring is bad. Very bad.

**What does a thesis statement *look like?*** We will use *To Kill a Mockingbird* as our example.

Your thesis statement should be **one sentence** that lists **three areas** that you will detail to prove your argument:

* Universal Theme: **Prejudice**
* Question: Which characters in the town of Maycomb **illustrate prejudice**?
* Thesis statement: **Prejudice** in the town of Maycomb is illustrated in the characters of *Bob Ewell, Walter Cunningham,* and *Miss Merriweather*.

Notice that the thesis statement ***answers the question*** and lists three areas (Bob Ewell, Walter Cunningham, and Miss Meriweather) to use as examples to prove your argument.

* This statement is *argumentative* because ***nowhere in the novel is it ever stated that these characters are prejudiced!*** You must use **inference** (remember that word?) to reach your conclusion.

**D. The fourth step is The Graphic Outline**

Now that you have a solid thesis statement, before you begin actually writing the essay, you must outline, graphically, your analysis. This **graphic outline** will become your roadmap.

It looks like this:

**Question**

**Thesis Statement: The argument you wish to prove (the *answer* to the above question)**

**Topic Sentence #3**

**Topic Sentence #1**

**Topic Sentence #2**

**Quote/Evidence**

**Quote/Evidence**

**Quote/Evidence**

**Conclusion**

**(*restatement* of your thesis)**

Using the chosen thesis example (prejudice in *To Kill a Mockingbird*), your graphic outline might look something like this:

**Question: Which characters in the town of Maycomb illustrate prejudice?**

**Quote p. 232**

**Attempting to harm**

**Atticus for defending**

**Tom shows that**

**Walter Cunningham**

**is prejudiced.**

**Miss Merriweather is an**

**illustration of prejudice**

**through her treatment**

**of her maid.**

**Thesis:** Prejudice in the town of Maycomb is illustrated in the characters of Bob Ewell, Walter Cunningham, and Miss Merriweather.

**Quote pp. 153**

**Restatement of thesis:** Bob Ewell, Walter Cunningham, and Miss Merriweather are clear illustrations of the prejudice of Maycomb.

**Quote pp. 172-173**

**Bob Ewell shows prejudice**

**when he accuses Tom**

**Robinson of a crime.**

***\*\*IMPORTANT NOTE:* BE SURE TO PLACE YOUR THREE ARGUMENT POINTS IN ORDER OF *LEAST IMPORTANT OR STRONG*** TO ***MOST IMPORTANT OR STRONG***

**E. Step Five: The Rough Draft**

The rough draft is the ***first attempt at your essay***. Do *not* concern yourself with grammar, spelling, spacing, or neatness on the rough draft. The rough draft ***must be handwritten in your composition notebook! Let me say that again: THE ROUGH DRAFT MUST BE HANDWRITTEN IN YOUR COMPOSITION NOTEBOOK! WHY?***

* The rough draft is where you get all your ideas out, no matter how silly or crazy or wrong they may be.
* If you were to type it, you would be tempted to delete any ideas that you initially think are stupid. THIS IS A HUGE MISTAKE! We are all our own worst critics. We ALL think our ideas are stupid at first.
* With a handwritten rough draft, all your ideas stay intact and you may decide that that idea you thought was stupid at the beginning is actually pretty amazing.

**F. Step Six: The First Draft**

The first draft is ***your first attempt at organizing and cleaning up your essay***. This draft should ***look like your final draft***. You have *double-spaced* it, added your *heading and title*, and you should have taken care to clean up your *spelling, grammar, and punctuation*. This draft will be peer or teacher edited.

* This draft should be typed ***or*** handwritten on loose-leaf paper, NO EXCEPTIONS!

**G. Step Seven: The Final Draft**

The final draft is the final ***paper to be turned in for grading***. It should be *proofread* for spelling, grammar, and punctuation; *formatted* with double-spacing, heading, title, and page numbers; and *ready to be graded*. We will discuss later in this booklet the criteria for grading papers.

* This draft should be typed ***or*** handwritten on loose-leaf paper.
* This draft should be *neat* and *crease-free*.
* This draft should be the *best* possible draft of your paper.

**A note about the use of 1st person and verb tense in your paper:**

You must ***avoid using first person*** when you write a literary analysis. Therefore, using the statements “I think” or “In my opinion” or “I believe” is completely unnecessary. The simple fact that your name appears on the paper indicates that it is your opinion. Some students think that eliminating “I think” or “I believe” makes them seem arrogant or overconfident. In reality, people do not react to a writer’s work in this way, and it is understood that opinions need to be stated clearly and forcefully. ***Unless I tell you that this is a “personal essay,” you will write only in the THIRD PERSON PRESENT TENSE.***

* This idea of present tense can be confusing, so let me show you an example:

--**Incorrect**: I think Scout Finch *was* scared of touching Boo Radley’s house, so she *refused* to go near it.

--**Correct**: Scout Finch *is* scared of touching Boo Radley’s house, so she *refuses* to go near it.

THE SECOND EXAMPLE IS CORRECT BECAUSE IT IS WRITTEN IN PRESENT TENSE, MAKING YOUR ARGUMENT MORE IMMEDIATE AND COMPELLING. ALSO, “I THINK” WAS REMOVED BECAUSE THE READER ALREADY KNOWS IT IS WHAT YOU THINK.

**\*\*SEE THE SAMPLE ESSAY AT THE BACK OF THIS BOOKLET FOR EXAMPLES OF HOW THIRD PERSON PRESENT TENSE WORKS CORRECTLY.**

Part III- Elements: Introduction, Body Paragraphs, and Conclusion

A**. The Introduction**

Your introduction should contain at least ***four*** sentences:

* **Opening sentence**(s): The purpose of the opening sentence is to grab your reader’s attention (or “hook” them) and ***introduce the universal idea*** you are exploring (this part of the introduction may be one to four sentences) To grab the reader’s attention, you may use ***exaggeration***, a ***provocative quote***, or simply a bold, opinionated statement. ***The work you are writing about should, in no way, be mentioned or referred to in any way in your opening sentence(s)!***
* **Connecting sentence(s)** that links your **universal idea to the material** you are writing about (this part of the into should be one or two sentences). This usually is the part of the intro that first mentions the work you are writing about.***This is where you should place the title and the author of the work you are writing about!***
* Your **thesis** **statement** (**this should be the last sentence of your introduction). This should only be *one* sentence!**

Graphically, your introduction should look like an **inverted pyramid**, going from ***broad (universal) to narrow (how that universal idea is connected to the book, story, or poem you are writing about)***:

Opening Sentence(s):

Attention grabber; universal idea

Connecting sentence:

Introduce title and author

Connecting sentence

Thesis statement

**Sample Introduction (from an essay on William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*):**

**Power: What so many human beings try to obtain. Men kill to obtain it; they**

**plow through loved ones, doing whatever they can to get to it. Once a position of**

**power is obtained, men attempt to play god for others that they perceive to be lower**

**beings. They accomplish this by controlling their lives, for minutes or even for years.**

**William Shakespeare illustrates this passion for power in his play *The Tempest*.**

**Prospero, the old duke of Milan, plays god on the island where he is trapped by**

**controlling the weather, by leading the nobles unknowingly to him, and by watching**

**and controlling their evil plots.**

**IMPORTANT POINTS ABOUT THE INTRODUCTION:**

1) **Nothing** about the specifics of the book, story, or poem, including title and author, should be mentioned at all in the opening sentence(s). **Keep it *universal*!**

2) The **title and author** of the work ***must*** be mentioned in first connecting sentence of your introduction.

3) **The thesis statement is *always* the last sentence of the introduction**, with **three points** *clearly* contained within it.

**B. The Body Paragraphs**

Your literary analysis will contain ***three body paragraphs***. Each of these body paragraphs will detail the arguments for each of your three thesis points, in order.

1) Each body paragraph should be a ***minimum*** of **five sentences**.

2) Each body paragraph has an opening ***topic sentence*** that communicates the **main point from your thesis** statement to be discussed.

3) At *least* one sentence that argues your thesis point.

4) A **quote from the text** you are analyzing that acts as *proof* for your argument.

5) A **transition statement** that takes the reader from ***the argument you just made*** to the ***argument you will make next*** (this does *not* apply to your third body paragraph) ***See sample essay at end of booklet! Look at final sentences of the first two body paragraphs: These are transition sentences!***

**IMPORTANT POINTS ABOUT YOUR BODY PARAGRAPHS**

**Transition Statements**: Transition statements, which occur at ***the end of your first and second body paragraphs***, help the reader by concluding the point you just made and introducing the point you will make next. There are many, many different ways to write a transition statement, but **the concept never changes**. Below are examples of weak transitions and strong transitions.

**Weak Transition**:

--Bob Ewell is prejudiced and so is Miss Merriweather.

**Strong Transition**:

--While Bob Ewell is obvious about his prejudices, the character of Miss

Merriweather is much more sneaky about her views.

As you can see, the first transition is boring and obvious, while the second is much more interesting and focused on your specific argument. ***Writing strong transition statements is more of an art than a science, so you must practice the concept often to get it right.***

**Avoid Plot Summary**: While you will need details to use as examples for your argument, this is not a “book report”. You should proofread carefully to make sure that all plot details are only there to support your argument. Remember: I’ve read the book or play; I don’t need you to summarize the plot for me.

**Vivid Language and Complex Sentence Structure**: The **cardinal rule** of writing is the following: **“Don’t be dull and boring.”** Always be attempting to use more vivid, interesting, specific, and bold word choice. Avoid using vague words like “nice” or “very” or “pretty”. Words like these are **subjective** (which means they mean different things to different people), so they will only bore and confuse your reader. By the same token, ***avoid using simple sentences*** when **compound sentences** will do the job much more effectively. This shows the reader that you’re capable of making a strong, intellectual argument.

What makes the body paragraphs crucial is that they are the parts of the paper where you **develop your thesis**. You provide evidence and specifically argue your point, using **the text as your main source of that evidence**.

**PLEASE TURN TO THE SAMPLE ESSAY TO SEE HOW THESIS POINTS ARE DEVELOPED IN EACH BODY PARAGRAPH!**

**C. The Conclusion**

Your conclusion should be a **minimum** of **four sentences** long and should contain the following:

1) **A restatement of your thesis**. This should be a ***new construction of your thesis*** statement, ***not a verbatim repetition***. ***THIS IS THE FIRST SENTENCE OF YOUR CONCLUSION!***

2) **Connecting sentences**: These connect your thesis points back to the more universal point you made way back in your introduction.

4) A **final, memorable, *universal*** statement illustrating the importance of your argument.

This sentence should bring closure to your essay and be the final thought you want your reader left with. ***IF YOUR READER REMEMBERS NOTHING ELSE ABOUT YOUR ESSAY, THEY SHOULD REMEMBER THIS SENTENCE.***

**The Pyramid**

**In other words, your conclusion should be a *mirror image of your introduction*, in structure. It should look like a regular pyramid, with your ideas moving from *narrow (related to the text)* to *broad (universal)*:**

Restate Thesis

Connecting Sentence

Connecting Sentence

Final, Memorable, Universal

Statement

**WHAT TO ALWAYS REMEMBER ABOUT YOUR CONCLUSION:**

1) **Never**, ***EVER*** use the words **“In conclusion”** or **“Finally” or *any* words of that nature ANYWHERE** in your conclusion.

2) Be sure to ***restate*** your thesis, ***not repeat*** it!

3) Your ***final sentence*** should should be ***memorable*** and **universal**!

**Part IV: Citing and Quoting Text**

***Every body paragraph should contain at least one citation from the text you are analyzing that supports your argument***. This “quote” must be **relevant** to the argument you are making.

The rules and guidelines for quoting text are different for all the ***different types of literature***. The following is a rundown:

**FOR NOVELS, SHORT STORIES, OR ARTICLES**

**1) The page number the quote appears on should appear in parentheses immediately following the quote**:

Example (from *To Kill a Mockingbird)*:

Harper Lee expresses her feelings about the town by saying, "Maycomb was a tired

old town when I first knew it." **(5)**

**2) When quoting a *character* within the text, you should remember the rules for *quotes within quotes***:

Example (from *To Kill a Mockingbird*):

Harper Lee illustrates Jem's growing maturity when she says, "Jem brushed his hair

back to get a better look. 'Why don't you come over, Charles Baker Harris?' he

said." (7)

**3) When quoting text that consists of *three or more lines*, you must use what is called an *inset quote* to cite it. Every line should be written exactly like in the original text and each line must be indented. There are *no quotation marks* needed for this, but you still need to *note the page number***:

Example:

Scout experiences the injustice of the world after she is punished by her uncle:

I ran to Atticus for comfort, but he said I had it coming and

it was high time we went home. I climbed into the back seat

of the car without saying good-bye to anyone, and at home

I ran to my room and slammed the door. (112)

Clearly, her reaction is childlike, but the pain of the punishment is strong.

**FOR POETRY AND SHAKESPEAREAN VERSE**

**1) When citing poetry, for three or fewer lines, *show where the lines end with slashes* and capital letters at the beginnings of the lines. *Line numbers follow in parentheses***:

Example (from a Robert Frost poem):

Metaphorically describing a pile of leaves as a snake, Robert

Frost sees nature as threatening: "Out in the porch's sagging

floor / Leaves got up in a coil and hissed, / Blindly struck at my

knee and missed." (8-10)

**2) For *Shakespearean quotes*, instead of lines, you will use a *Line Reference*, which cites the act, scene, and line(s):** For act 1, scene 5, lines 182-184:

**(1.5.182-184)**

**3) For *poetry or Shakespeare text of four lines or more*, use *inset quotes* and write it *exactly as it was originally written (including all punctuation, spellings, and line endings)****:*

Example (from William Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*):

Macbeth expresses his final despair with a theatre metaphor:

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player

Tha struts and frets his hour upon the stage

And then is heard no more. It is a tale

Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury

Signifying nothing. (5.5.24-28)

Macbeth eventually brings about his own tragic end.

**FOR *ALL* TYPES OF TEXTS (NOVELS, SHORT STORIES, ARTICLES, POETRY, AND SHAKESPEARE)**

**1) *Use*  an *ellipsis with brackets* to indicate the text you are quoting continues *beyond the end of the quotation OR to show omission of material that you don't want to use***:

**Example (from William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*):**

Banquo questions the intentions of the witches when he says, "And

oftentimes, to win us to our harm, / The instruments of darkness

tell us truths **[...]**" (1.3.123-4)

**Example (from a George Orwell novel):**

By shooting the elephant, Orwell's hero satisfies the Burmese

natives: "When I pulled the trigger **[...]** I heard the devilish roar of

glee that went up from the crowd." (154)

**What to Always Remember When Using Quotes**

1) Always make sure that you *properly cite where the quote came from in* ***parentheses*.**

2) Be careful with your punctuation. Note in the examples above where I used ***colons*** and where I used ***commas*** before the quote. ***Rule of thumb***: Use *commas* before quotes that are preceded by verbs (such as “says” or “states” or “asks,” etc.), and use ***colons*** before quotes that are preceded by **nouns** (such as “metaphor” and “natives” in the examples above)

**Part V- Mechanics: Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling**

This section is pretty self-explanatory. You should always be working on ***perfecting all these areas*** and either **looking up answers** or **asking me for help** if unsure *how* to say what you *want* to say.

**WHAT YOU SHOULD ALWAYS REMEMBER REGARDING MECHANICS:**

1) All essays are to be written in the ***3rd person point of view*.**

2) All essays are to be written in the ***present tense***, except when referring to *historical* information. For example: You might say, “When Atticus *was* in college, he *met* his wife” because that refers to events before the action you’re referencing.

3) All ***titles*** ***of books or plays are to be italicized when typed (they should be underlined*** ***when handwritten)***. All ***titles of poems, short stories, and articles are to be written in quotes.***

4) You should ***never use contractions*** in an essay (unless they are contained in the text you are quoting).

5) **Run-on sentences, fragments,** and **awkward wording will *kill* an essay**. I can’t say this enough! PROOFREAD FOR THESE! I take away a lot of points for these kinds of mistakes. Anything that makes the reader look twice to figure out what you are saying can ruin your argument.

6) Because the rules of spelling and punctuation are pretty clear-cut, there really is **no excuse for careless errors** in these areas. You should always make it a point, in all your writing, to **always seek perfection** in these areas. Spelling, comma usage, punctuation marks, capitalization, and end marks are easy to correct, but their misuses can also be difficult to spot. PROOFREAD FOR PUNCTUATION!

**Part VI- Evaluation: Editing and Grading**

Because each writer has a different style and approach, each essay must be looked at in certain areas by the teacher ***subjectively***. This means that, apart from mechanics, clarity, structure, and coherence, the ***content and writing style of each essay is going to be different, just as each student is different***. Every writer has their own style and point of view. Ultimately, how effectively and interestingly you make your argument, the more likely you are to receive a higher grade. But, **if your writing is plagued by grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors, it won’t matter how great your *argument* is**; an *unreadable* paper is a *poor* paper.

**A. Editing**

I will be using the following editing marks on your papers:

\_\_\_\_\_ Italicize (*To Kill a Mockingbird*, ***not*** To Kill a Mockingbird)

\_\_\_\_\_ Author and Title (“*To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee”, ***not*** “the book”)

\_\_\_\_\_ Insert comma

\_\_\_\_\_ Insert period

\_\_\_\_\_ Insert question mark

\_\_\_\_\_ Insert double quotation mark

\_\_\_\_\_ Insert single quotation mark

\_\_\_\_\_ Insert semi-colon

\_\_\_\_\_ Insert colon

\_\_\_\_\_ Strike (“After Jem leaves the courtroom, he he makes a tough decision.”)

\_\_\_\_\_ Capitalize/make lower case (*To Kill a mockingbird*; Jem’s Father Atticus)

\_\_\_\_\_ Do not bold (The Prejudice of Maycomb, ***not*** **The Prejudice of Maycomb**)

\_\_\_\_\_ Do not underline (The Prejudice of Maycomb, ***not*** The Prejudice of Maycomb)

­\_\_\_\_\_ Fragment (“Atticus is a hero. A good father. He is also a good friend”)

\_\_\_\_\_ Run-on (“Atticus is a hero, a good father, he is also a good friend”)

\_\_\_\_\_ Insert apostrophe (“Scouts brother is named Jem.”)

\_\_\_\_\_ Incorrect verb tense (“Scout and Jem are disillusioned,” ***not* “**Scout and Jem were

disillusioned.”)

\_\_\_\_\_ Spelling error (“Scout’s bruther is named Jem.”)

\_\_\_\_\_ Fuse words (*To Kill a Mocking Bird*)

\_\_\_\_\_ Disconnect words (“Dill puts alot of his imagination to good use.”)

\_\_\_\_\_ Awkward, stilted, or confusing phrasing; not sure what you mean

\_\_\_\_\_Transpose-rearrange words or phrases (“At the end of the story, he gives in finally.”)

\_\_\_\_\_Add hyphen(s) (“His sister is 6 years old.”)

\_\_\_\_\_Good point!

\_\_\_\_\_Great point!

In addition, pay close attention to **comments in the margins**.

**B. The Grading Rubric**

The following is the chart that graphs, generally, how a paper is finally evaluated:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Topic Development  *The overall effect of the paper from beginning to end* | Organiza-tion *How well it's focused and logically ordered (intro, transitions, thesis, body paragraphs conclusion)* | Support *The proper use of examples to support the main points of the thesis* | **Sentence** Structure *Sentences are complete and use correct grammar (no run-ons, fragments, s/v agreement, etc...). They are also varied in length and structure.* | Word Choice *Vocabulary, choice of words, and correct usage of words* | Mechanics *Spelling, punctuation, and capitalization*. |
| **"A+" Paper** | -Richly developed  -Original point of view  -Insightful and imaginative | -Carefully organized from beginning to end  -Clear focus  -Logical order | -Full, rich supporting details  -Details are relevant and appropriate | -Sentence variety enhances style  -No errors in structure or usage  -Sophisticated sentence patterns used successfully | -Rich, effective vocabulary  -Vivid language  -Correct usage | -Very few or no mechanical errors |
| **"A"-**  **"A-" Paper** | -Fluent, fully developed  -Clear awareness of task  -Evidence of originality in point of view  -Solid | Organized from beginning to end  -Clear focus  -Logical order | -Details strong, but lacking richness  -Details are relevant and appropriate | -Sentence variety is appropriate  -Few errors in structure or usage  -Moderate success with sophisticated sentences | -Effective vocabulary  -Generally successful with vivid language  -Generally correct usage | -Few or no mechanical errors |
| "B" Paper | -Moderately fluent  -Awareness of task  -Ideas limited in depth | -Organized, but with minor lapses in order or structure  -Focused | -Details are adequate to support thesis  -Details generally relevant and appropriate | -Some sentence variety  -Some errors in structure or usage  -Attempts to use more sophisticated structure not totally successful | -Acceptable vocabulary  -Attempts to use rich language  -Generally correct usage  -Dishonest use of big words | -Some mechanical errors that do not interfere with communication |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **"C" Paper** | -Thinly developed  -Some awareness of task  -Unclear | -Focus unclear or limited  -Poor transitions  -Shift in point of view  -Lacks real  conclusion | -Details lack follow-through  -Some details don't support thesis  -Important details missing | -Little sentence variety  -Errors in sentence structure  -Too many simple or repetitive constructions | -Simplistic vocabulary with very little word choice  -Noticeable errors in usage | -Some mechanical errors that do interfere with meaning  -Too many mechanical errors that cause problems for the reader |
| "D" Paper | -Poorly developed  -Poor awareness of task  -Unclear | -Unfocused  -Thought patterns difficult to follow  -Shift in point of view  -Resembles freewriting  -No conclusion | -Details merely listed, not supported  -Repetitive details  -Too few details | -No sentence variety  -Serious errors in structure or usage | -Simplistic vocabulary with inappropriate or incorrect word choice  -Numerous usage errors | -Noticeable mechanical errors that interfere with communication  -Errors cause major problems for the reader |
| "F" Paper | -Not developed  -No awareness of task  -Unclear | -So short or muddled that it completely lacks focus | -Virtually no details  -Details that are there are irrelevant | -Lack of sentence sense  -Riddled with errors  -Too brief to be deemed acceptable | -Inadequate vocabulary  -Too brief to evaluate | -Mechanical errors seriously interfere with communication |

**Part VII: Peer Editing Review Sheet for the Five-Paragraph Essay**

Writer of essay\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Reader of essay \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Physical Format:** Is the essay ***double-spaced throughout (including the heading)***? Yes No

Is the heading correct (name, date, teacher, period)? Yes No

Is there an ***original*** title? Yes No

**The Introduction:**

Is the thesis the ***last*** statement of the introduction paragraph? Yes No

Does the thesis statement contain *three* clear points? Yes No

Is the thesis a *provable* argument? Is it specific? Yes No

Is the thesis statement clear and easy to understand? Yes No

If you answered “No” to *any* of the previous 3 questions, what ***changes*** to the thesis do you recommend?

Does the introduction include the ***author and title of the work(s)?*** Yes No

If no, ***circle*** the information that is missing: author title of the work

Does the introduction provide information about the work, ***moving from general, universal information to the specific topic (thesis) of the essay (does it use the “Inverted Pyramid” style)?***

Yes No

Does the introduction contain **at least 4 sentences**? Yes No

Is it ***free of spelling and grammatical errors***? Yes No

If *no*, please *circle* where you see the error. ***DO NOT CORRECT THE ERRORS FOR THEM!***

**First Body Paragraph:**

Does this body paragraph contain a ***first topic sentence that is connected clearly to the first point of the thesis***?

Yes No

Does this body paragraph contain enough ***specific evidence (details) from the work to support the first point of the thesis***? Yes No

Does this body paragraph contain a ***quotation*** ***from the text***? Yes No

Does this body paragraph contain a ***minimum of plot summary***? Yes No

Does this body paragraph ***stick to the first point of the thesis argument***? Yes No

If *not*, please suggest a way to do this:

Does this body paragraph contain **at least 5 sentences**? Yes No

Is ***each sentence connected or related to the thesis***? Yes No

Is this body paragraph ***free of spelling and grammatical errors***? Yes No

Is the ***last sentence*** of this body paragraph a ***transition sentence*** that concludes the first thesis point and introduces the second thesis point? Yes No

If *no*, ***circle the areas in this body paragraph in which you see grammatical or spelling errors. DO NOT CORRECT THEM!***

What ***suggestions*** for ***improving this body paragraph*** do you have (word choice, sentence structure)?

**Second Body Paragraph:**

Does this body paragraph contain a ***first topic sentence that is connected clearly to the second point of the thesis***?

Yes No

Does this body paragraph contain enough ***specific evidence (details) from the work to support the second point of the thesis***? Yes No

Does this body paragraph contain a ***quotation*** ***from the text***? Yes No

Does this body paragraph contain a ***minimum of plot summary***? Yes No

Does this body paragraph ***stick to the second point of the thesis argument***? Yes No

If *not*, please suggest a way to do this:

Does this body paragraph contain ***at least 5 sentences***? Yes No

Is ***each sentence connected or related to the thesis***? Yes No

Is this body paragraph ***free of spelling and grammatical errors***? Yes No

Is the ***last sentence*** of this body paragraph a ***transition sentence*** that concludes the second thesis point and introduces the third thesis point? Yes No

If *no*, ***circle the areas in this body paragraph in which you see grammatical or spelling errors. DO NOT CORRECT THEM!***

What ***suggestions*** for ***improving this body paragraph*** do you have (word choice, sentence structure)?

**Third Body Paragraph:**

Does this body paragraph contain a ***first topic sentence that is connected clearly to the third point of the thesis***?

Yes No

Does this body paragraph contain enough ***specific evidence (details) from the work to support the third point of the thesis***? Yes No

Does this body paragraph contain a ***quotation*** ***from the text***? Yes No

Does this body paragraph contain a ***minimum of plot summary***? Yes No

Does this body paragraph ***stick to the third point of the thesis argument***? Yes No

If *not*, please suggest a way to do this:

Does the body paragraph contain ***at least 5 sentences***? Yes No

Is ***each sentence of this body paragraph connected or related to the thesis***? Yes No

Is this paragraph ***free of spelling and grammatical errors***? Yes No

If *no*, ***circle the areas in this body paragraph in which you see grammatical or spelling errors. DO NOT CORRECT THEM!***

What ***suggestions*** for ***improving this body paragraph*** do you have (word choice, sentence structure)?

# Conclusion

Does the conclusion ***begin with a restatement of the thesis***? Yes No

Does the conclusion ***end on a universal note***? Does it leave you with a ***final, memorable, universal thought***?

Yes No

If *no*, what suggestion(s) do you have?

Is the conclusion ***free of grammatical and spelling errors***? Yes No

If *no*, please *circle* where you see the error. ***DO NOT CORRECT THE ERROR FOR THEM!***

## **Documentation of text with quotes**

Are ***quotations*** in the essay documented with ***page (or line numbers for poetry or Shakespeare) in parentheses*** after each one? Yes No

# Overall:

Are the ***verb tenses*** of the essay consistently ***present tense***? Yes No

Is the essay ***free of 1st (I, me, we, us, etc.) and 2nd person (you, your, you’re, etc.) references***? Yes No

Is the essay ***free of contractions*** (don’t, can’t, won’t, wouldn’t, etc.)? Yes No

# Does the essay follow the directions of the assignment? Yes No

If not, what needs to be done so that the essay satisfies the requirements of the assignment (examples: reduce plot summary, more details, correct the format, etc.)?

# What are the *best points of the draft you have read* (examples: good word choice, strong thesis, good use of details, perfect spelling, etc.)? YOU MUST WRITE *AT LEAST ONE GOOD POINT!*

What ***other improvements*** would you suggest?

**Part VIII: Graphic Outline Template**

**Second Body Paragraph Topic Sentence:**

**First Body Paragraph Topic Sentence:**

**Thesis Statement:**

**Question:**

**Third Body Paragraph Topic Sentence:**

**Restatement of thesis:**

Quote 3:

Quote 2:

Quote 1:

**Part IX: The Essay Process Checklist**

I. Have you identified your universal theme? yes no

II. Have you created a Question? yes no

III. Have you created a Thesis Statement that answers your

Question? yes no

IV. Have you completed a Graphic Outline? yes no

V. Have you completed your Rough Draft? yes no

VI. Is your Rough Draft *handwritten* in your compostion

notebook? yes no

VII. Have you completed your First Draft? yes no

VIII. Is your first draft formatted correctly (heading, title,

double-spaced)? yes no

IX. Have you completed your Final Draft? yes no

X. Is your Final Draft formatted correctly (heading, title,

double-spaced, page numbers)? yes no

XI. Is the first sentence of your introduction universal? yes no

XII. Is it provocative and attention-grabbing? yes no

XIII. Do you have transition sentences at the ends of your

first two body paragraphs? yes no

XIV. Is the final sentence of your conclusion memorable

and universal? yes no

XV. Have you proofread for spelling errors? yes no

XVI. Have you proofread for punctuation errors (commas,

end marks, italics/underlining, no contractions,

quotation marks, etc)? yes no

XVII. Have you proofread for grammar errors (run-ons,

fragments, awkward phrasing, verb tenses, etc)? yes no

XVIII. Is your word choice and sentence structure as vivid and

interesting as they can be? yes no

XIX. Is your Final Draft clean and neat? yes no

XX. Is this the best essay you’ve written so far? yes no

**Part X: The Essay Grading Form**

\*\***PLEASE REFER TO YOUR EDITED ESSAY FOR SPECIFICS IF YOU LOST POINTS FOR**

**ANY OF THE FOLLOWING REQUIREMENTS\*\***

**\*Anything circled indicates that that item is missing completely and/or needs a great deal of attention on future work\***

**Formatting**

Correct heading, double-spacing, original title, and page numbers.

\_\_\_\_\_ 15 points possible

**Content**

Correct introduction, topic sentences, quotes from the text, transition statements, correct conclusion.

\_\_\_\_\_ 30 points possible

**Mechanics**

Punctuation, spelling, and grammar.

\_\_\_\_\_ 30 points possible

**Miscellaneous**

Vivid and interesting word choice; interesting and complex sentence structure; risky argument; minimal plot summary; clear and specific details connected to your thesis arguments.

\_\_\_\_\_ 25 points possible

**Final Grade (out of 100) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Strengths**: **Weaknesses**:

**Part XI: The Sample Essay**

Patrick Green

1-6-04

Note the double-spacing *throughout* as well as the *original* title with no bolding, italicizing, or underlining

Mr. Green

1st Period

A "No" Would Have Sufficed

If our parents were now in our places, would they make the same choices and face the same consequences that we do? Of course not; they would benefit from experience and be expected to do the right thing at the most crucial moments. Friar Lawrence in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, however, is the exception to this rule. He is, in many ways, more childish than the children he advises, thus sending them to their doom. **He is at least partially responsible for the deaths of the title protagonists by committing the following actions: *marrying them*, *aiding Juliet in deceiving her parents in a most cruel way*, and, finally, *by fleeing the scene of the crime at the climax of the saga*.**

Note the *thesis statement* with *three clear points*. This is the *last sentence of the introduction.*

As a man of the cloth, Friar Lawrence is in a powerful position to marry those that most want to be wed. In the case of the play, he is also a father-figure for Romeo. This places the Friar in a position of great responsibility. Simply saying "no" when asked to marry the two teens would have been the adult thing to do. However, Friar Lawrence lets his own greed and pride get in the way of his better judgment, thinking that the marriage would mend the feud between the two families: "[...] this alliance may so happy prove/To turn your households' rancor to pure love." (II.iii.91-92) ***This fateful action* leads to *the desperation of using Juliet to cover up his own dreadful mistakes.***

Note the *transition statement* that leads the reader from the first thesis point to the next thesis point.

By act four, Friar Lawrence has already wreaked so much havoc on the city of Verona that he is blinded by his need to escape. His complete lack of responsibility in the past are not mistakes from which he has learned anything, however. No, in fact, he only exacerbates the situation when he agrees to help Juliet deceive her parents by giving her a medicine that will give her the appearance of death: This plan "craves as desperate an execution/As that is desperate which we would prevent." (IV.i.69-70) This utterly immature, dangerous, and immoral action is the first domino in a long line that eventually terminates with the deaths of our heroes. **Nevertheless, even when the Friar is given one final opportunity to do the right thing, he seals their deaths by running like a child caught with his hand in a cookie jar.**

Note the *transition statement* that leads the reader from the *second thesis point* to the *third thesis point.*

In act five, Friar Lawrence is confident that his plan will work. However, he fails to foresee the possibilities that might lead to the plan running off track. When his letter to Romeo is misdirected, the Friar seems confused and, of course, becomes desperate once again. The reader, by this time, should have no trouble predicting how he will proceed at this point: I will "keep her at my cell till Romeo come--/Poor living corse, clos'd in a dead man's tomb!" (V.iii.29-30) He reaches the tomb too late and, upon hearing some noise, instead of taking Juliet with him and saving at least one life, he runs like a scared kitten, leaving Juliet to discover Romeo's lifeless form and commit suicide. Surely, the Friar, like any reasonably intelligent person, could have seen that she might commit such an act! No. By act 5, the reader has become accustomed to such cowardice and lack of common sense.

**Friar Lawrence makes three crucial, deadly mistakes: Marrying Romeo and Juliet, planning Juliet's deceit, and fleeing when the young lovers need him the most**. His irresponsibility is vital, however, to the themes of the play. Without him, there is no one to give the heroes credibility and respectability. He is the lone adult figure that consistently provides them the support they feel they need. That support, however, proves to be too much. Anyone in Friar Lawrence's position would be well-advised to follow his own advice to Romeo at the end of act two, scene three: "Wisely and slow," he says, "they stumble that run fast." (94)

Note the *restatement of the thesis* (NOT a repetition of the thesis) as the *first sentence of the conclusion.*